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IFAS EXTENSION

Friday's Feature

By

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New hydrangeas provide flowers throughout the summer

Many people remember hydrangeas from their childhood. We remember a shade preferring shrub that produced large clusters of pink or blue flowers. This group of plants is gaining new popularity as many new and rediscovered cultivars are hitting the market.

Dr. Gary Knox, Professor and Extension Specialist at UF/IFAS North Florida Research and Education Center, provides the following timely information on some of the newer cultivars in this genus.

Bigleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) and mountain hydrangea (*H. serrata*) are the two species most commonly associated with what most people call a hydrangea. Many new cultivars of these two *Hydrangea* species have been introduced in recent years. Some of the newer cultivars bloom repeatedly throughout the summer, providing more garden impact and strengthening the ongoing appreciation of hydrangea.

Reflowering hydrangeas have been recognized by collectors and breeders for decades, but they were never commercially promoted on a large scale. The first hydrangea that reflowers on "new" wood was noted by renowned plantsman, Dr. Michael Dirr. He first saw this hydrangea in the trial garden of a wholesale nursery in Minnesota. One of the nursery employees had noticed that a neighbor's hydrangea flowered late in the year, and he was given permission to propagate and test the plant. This hydrangea remained in the nursery for a number of years. However, Dr. Dirr recognized the plant had tremendous garden and commercial potential. This plant was given the cultivar name of 'Bailmer' and is now widely known as Endless Summer® hydrangea. This plant has been promoted with an elaborate marketing campaign, resulting in national awareness and huge sales.

Shortly after this discovery, Dr. Dirr and others found similar reflowering hydrangeas in a few home gardens across the nation. These scattered plants subsequently were collected and given the names 'Penny Mac', 'Decatur Blue', 'David Ramsey' and 'Oak Hill'. In addition, a number of old cultivars of hydrangeas were noted as having reflowering characteristics but were never exploited.

New cultivars that reflower on new growth, also known as remontant, are generally available. They include 'David Ramsey', 'Decatur Blue', Endless Summer®, 'Oak Hill' and 'Penny Mac'. Other remontant cultivars that may be found at specialty nurseries are 'All Summer Beauty', 'Blue Deckle' and 'Coerulea Lace'. 'Blushing Bride' is expected to be released soon.

Other hydrangeas are known as free flowering. This means that the plant has late flushes of flowers that originate on old wood. The free flowering cultivars are somewhat available and include 'Ami Pasquier', 'Europa', 'Fuji Waterfall', 'Generale Vicomtesse de Vibraye', 'Lilacina', 'Mme Emile Mouillere', 'Nikko Blue' and 'Preziosa'.

Other free flowering cultivars that may be purchased from specialty nurseries are *H. macrophylla* ‘Altona’, ‘Bodensee’, ‘Bouquet Rose’, ‘Forever Pink’, ‘Frillibet’, ‘Gold Nugget’, ‘Goliath’, ‘Heinrich Seidel’, ‘La France’, ‘Mme Faustin Travouillon’, ‘Marechal Foch’, ‘Mousseline’, ‘Niedersachsen’, ‘Otaksa’, ‘Patio White’, ‘President R. Touchard’, ‘Princess Beatrix’, ‘Todi’, ‘Trophy’, ‘Wayne’s White’ and ‘Wildenstein’. ‘Ayesha’ and ‘Tovelit’ also are reported to reflower in north Florida.

The success of Endless Summer® hydrangea spurred interest in developing and promoting other hydrangeas. The following are considered “new” or otherwise notable but are ***not*** expected to reflower: Big Daddy™, ‘Early Sensation’, ‘Eclipse’, ‘Forever & Ever Double Pink’, ‘Forever & Ever Pink’, ‘Forever & Ever Red’, ‘Lady In Red’, ‘Lemon Wave’, ‘Lemon Zest’, ‘Mariesii Variegata’ and ‘Miyama-yae-Murasaki’ (“Purple Tiers”). These and other continuing efforts indicate we can anticipate many more new hydrangeas in coming years.

Theresa Friday is the Residential Horticulture Extension Agent for Santa Rosa County. The use of trade names, if used in this article, is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product name(s) and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others. For additional information about all of the county extension services and other articles of interest go to: <http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/extension>